Center for Information Technology

NIH Participates in "The Future of Health" Panel at Google Next

Monday, June 17, 2019

Beth Meagher, Andrea Norris, Aashima Gupta, Jon Latshaw, and Doug Beaudoin.

“To best leverage the tremendous advances in technology with our scientific research and expertise requires cultural change,” said CIT Director and NIH Chief Information Officer Andrea Norris at the Google Cloud Next conference earlier this month.

Hundreds of healthcare enthusiasts and professionals gathered April 9-11 in San Francisco to learn how capturing, interpreting, and applying technology and real-time data is changing the health care industry.

Ms. Norris participated in a panel on data interoperability entitled “The Future of Health.” The panel addressed two prominent themes in the future of health care: the efficiency of participant-managed health care and the issue of data security in the cloud.

The other panelists included Deloitte Consulting vice chairman Doug Beaudoin, Google Cloud’s director of global healthcare solutions Aashima Gupta, and Cardinal Health’s vice president of cloud services Jon Latshaw. Deloitte federal strategy leader Beth Meagher served as the moderator.

Technological advancements in data storage and sharing allow healthcare research to become a more personal, efficient, and collaborative process. Beaudoin referred to this process as the “retailization of healthcare,” and as a result, “the way we buy health insurance could be dramatically different. [In the commercial cloud] individuals will own their data and [the right to] grant access to it.”

In order to keep up with these advancements, said Gupta, organizations must understand that “the cloud is not just a lift and shift strategy—it is a means to an end for business transformation. [Without] a solid data strategy, building an AI [artificial intelligence] strategy won’t take you far.”

The NIH adheres to this, Norris confirmed, by publishing its first ever Data Science Strategic Plan in June 2018 to accelerate discoveries and keep pace with rapid changes in biomedical data science.

The transition to commercial cloud computing for large biomedical data sets significantly changes the way the NIH and CIT conduct research. For NIH and CIT this is being made possible through The Science and Technology Research Infrastructure for Discovery, Experimentation, and Sustainability Initiative (STRIDES)**.** The STRIDES Initiative offers services and tools to access cloud service providers (CSPs), facilitating essential partnerships for NIH in academia and the technology industry to collaborate and analyze data more efficiently. By providing the biomedical research community with commercial cloud access, the NIH and CIT reduce research barriers and accelerate biomedical advances to best benefit human health.

By making this sensitive data easily accessible to the public, there is a huge concern with security compliance. The panelists emphasized that they advocate for selective data access consent and follow HIPAA compliance for cloud participant data. “[People] want assurance that [their] privacy is going to be protected,” said Norris. “We spend a lot of time, effort, and money to make sure we honor that.”